

What is claimed is:

1. An advertising method for distributing  
advertisements to user terminals on a network from an  
awareness device for managing user status, the advertising  
5 method:

storing as a user status-setting alternative a symbol  
representing an advertiser;

accepting from a primary user a request to use the  
symbol as a self-status designation; and

10 distributing to a secondary user the symbol  
representing the primary user's status.

2. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
the symbol use request is accepted on a Web Page  
provided by the advertiser; and

15 the symbol is added to status-setting alternatives for  
a user requesting use of the symbol on the Web Page.

3. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
a request to use the symbol is accepted from the  
secondary user receiving the symbol as the primary user's  
20 status; and

the symbol is added to status-setting alternatives for  
the secondary user.

4. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
a request to use the symbol is accepted from the  
25 secondary user receiving the symbol as the primary user's

status, and the symbol is added to status-setting alternatives for the secondary user; and

the secondary user or advertiser is requested to pay a charge for using the symbol.

5           5. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
the symbol representing the advertiser is stored with privileges the advertiser provides; and

when the request by the primary user to use the symbol as a self-status designation is accepted, the primary user  
10 is notified of privileges provided by the advertiser the designated symbol represents.

6. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
user-status symbol designation is accepted through a Web Page for the advertiser whereon privileges are provided  
15 for users;

setting the symbol as user status is reported from the user terminal or the advertiser to the awareness device; and  
the symbol is set by the awareness device as the user status.

20           7. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
the advertiser's symbol is stored with a referral count for the symbol during predetermined period; and

the advertiser is billed according to the referral count during the predetermined period.

25           8. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:

incentives are offered to the primary user according to a count of referrals by the secondary user to the symbol set as the primary user's status, or according to a copy count of times the symbol is added to status-setting alternatives  
5 for the secondary user; and

coupons from advertisers are offered to users according to the referral count or to the copy count.

9. An advertising method according to claim 1, wherein:  
purchasing information representing user purchase of  
10 the advertiser's items or services when purchased at an outlet is sent to an outlet terminal;

a predetermined process based on the purchasing information is performed at the outlet wherein the advertiser symbol and the user are reported from the user  
15 terminal or the outlet terminal to the awareness device; and

on receiving the report the awareness device sets as the reported user's status the symbol representing the reported advertiser.

10. An advertising method according to claim 1,  
20 wherein:

content operable or available for output on the user terminals is stored with a symbol representing the content in any of the terminals on the network;

if a user selects any of the contents the symbol  
representing the content and the user is reported to the  
awareness server from the network terminal; and

the awareness device sets as the user's status the  
5 symbol representing the content.

11. An advertising method according to claim 1,  
wherein:

by storing the advertiser's symbol in a device  
installed in an outlet for the advertiser and wirelessly  
10 sending the symbol to a user terminal, the symbol of the  
advertiser is set as the user status when the user visits  
the outlet.

12. A computer-readable recording medium on which is  
recorded a program for an advertising method for  
15 distributing advertisements to user terminals on a network,  
the program being employed by an awareness device for  
managing user status, the program for executing steps of:

A: storing as a user status-setting alternative a  
symbol representing an advertiser;

20 B: accepting from a primary user a request to use the  
symbol as a self-status designation; and

C: distributing to a secondary user the symbol  
representing the primary user's status.

13. An awareness server for managing user status,  
25 comprising:

storing means storing as a user status-setting  
alternative a symbol representing an advertiser;

accepting means accepting from a primary user a request  
to use the symbol as a self-status designation; and

5 distributing means distributing to a secondary user the  
symbol representing the primary user's status.

14. A user status setting method used for an awareness  
service accepting information on user status via a network  
and storing the information, accepting request by a user via  
10 a network and sends information on another user, and  
enabling requested user status to be referred to by request,  
comprising:

previously accepting a symbol including advertisement  
information from an advertiser as information for status  
15 setting of a user;

selectably presenting a symbol including advertisement  
information provided by the above-mentioned advertiser as  
information on primary user status;

setting a symbol including advertisement information  
20 selected by a primary user as a primary user status; and

presenting a symbol including advertisement information  
as primary user's status information when status reference  
request of a primary user from a secondary user is accepted.

15. A word-of-mouth advertising method using awareness  
25 services accepting and storing information on user status

via a network, accepting request of a user and sending information on other users via a network, and enabling required user status to be referred to, wherein

5 a symbol including advertisement information is previously accepted as information for user status setting from an advertiser;

the above-mentioned stored symbol is selected and set as information of user status by direction or act of the user; and

10 the above-mentioned symbol including the above-mentioned advertisement information is presented to the primary user requesting reference as status information set for the secondary user when reference request of secondary user's status of the primary user is accepted.

15 16. A word-of-mouth advertising method using awareness services accepting and storing information on user status via a network, accepting request of a user and sending information on other users via a network, and enabling required user status to be referred to, wherein

20 a symbol including advertisement information is previously accepted and stored as an alternative of user status setting from an advertiser;

the above-mentioned symbol including advertisement information provided by the advertiser is selected and set

as information on status of the above-mentioned primary user  
by direction or act of the primary user;

when reference request of the above-mentioned primary  
user is accepted from the secondary user, a symbol including  
5 advertisement information is presented as status information  
set for the above-mentioned primary user; and

the above-mentioned secondary user sets the presented  
symbol including advertisement information as a self status.

00774693 043004